

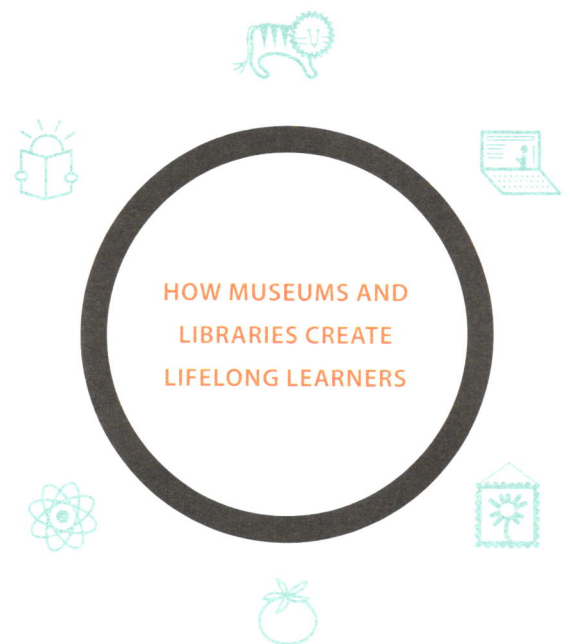
Growing Young Minds



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: CALL TO ACTION

Growing Young Minds: How Museums and Libraries Create Lifelong Learners calls upon policy makers and practitioners to fully use the capacity of libraries and museums to close knowledge and opportunity gaps and give all children a strong start in learning. Libraries and museums can play a significant role in early learning for all children. As our nation commits to early learning as a national priority essential to our economic and civic future, it is time to become more intentional about engaging these vital community resources. Libraries and museums reach millions of parents and children each year. They are trusted, welcoming places where children make discoveries, deepen common interests, expand words and knowledge, and connect their natural curiosity to the wider world. Neuroscientists tell us that the type of learning that occurs in these institutions—self-directed, experiential, content-rich—promotes executive function skills that can shape a child's success in school and life. These experiences and interactions build brains and fuel a love of learning.

Parents know this and flock to museums and libraries not only to support their child's learning but also to bolster their important role as their child's first teacher. The Pew Research Center's recent report, *Parents' and Children's Special Relationship with Reading and Libraries*, documents that an overwhelming percentage of parents of young children, especially those with annual incomes under \$50,000, believe that libraries are "very important" for their children, and are eager for more and varied family library services.¹



Education & Local Gov't Committee
September 23, 2013

Exhibit 18



e have to work to ensure that more children and parents, especially those at low socioeconomic levels, can tap into the learning resources of libraries and museums. According to a recent Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) analysis, only 36 percent of children with the lowest socioeconomic status visited libraries in their kindergarten year, compared to 66 percent of children in the highest; for museums, these figures are 43 percent versus 65 percent.² Recent research points out that the disparity of access to learning resources between children of affluence and those in poverty has created a knowledge gap with serious implications for students' economic prosperity and social mobility.³

These data underscore the urgency of this report. Libraries—public and school—and museums of all types—art, history, and children's museums; science centers; nature centers and gardens; aquaria; and zoos—form an extensive, diverse system of informal learning that is equipped to deliver early learning resources to young children and families, especially those most in need. Yet, in too many communities, museums and libraries are not “at the table” helping to craft the policies and practices that link children and their families to early learning resources.

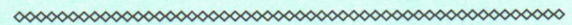
It is critical to act now to incorporate, and leverage, the well-established informal learning system of museums and libraries as an essential component of our nation's early learning network. It is a wise use of limited fiscal and human resources that will help our nation develop the potential of every child and result in a stronger economy, a more effective workforce, and a nation of learners. With an increased focus on their capacity, these institutions can be more essential early learning partners at the community, state, and national levels.

IMLS supports many of the programs and case studies highlighted in *Growing Young Minds*. This federal agency has a long history of identifying and funding innovative approaches that put young learners at the center and help social, civic, cultural, and educational organizations work in partnership in communities and at the state and national levels.

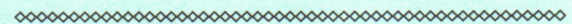
With this report, IMLS is deepening and expanding its commitment to the youngest and most at-risk children in the United States to assure that libraries and museums reach underserved children and provide opportunities that can make a difference and last a lifetime.

As We Work Together
to Meet Our Nation's
Early Learning Challenges,
Museums and Libraries Are:

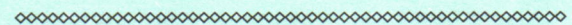
- ➔ Community anchors that provide safe and accessible civic spaces promoting lifelong learning, cultural enrichment, and civic engagement, especially for underserved and vulnerable families and their children.



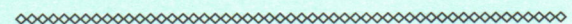
- ➔ Connectors that bridge the generations and bring children, their parents, and their families together in fun and nonthreatening settings that build mutual knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy.



- ➔ Innovative learning specialists that create exhibits, outreach programs, and environments that invite hands-on experiential learning.



- ➔ Stewards of rich cultural, scientific, environmental, and historical heritages, which offer robust collections of resources appealing to all disciplines and levels of learners.



- ➔ Digital hubs that provide guidance for navigating new technologies and identify trusted online resources to help close the digital divide for all children, their parents, and caregivers.

10 WAYS

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES SUPPORT EARLY LEARNING EFFORTS

There are 10 key ways in which museums and libraries are currently supporting communities' efforts to develop a strong start for young children's learning.

1

Increasing high-quality early learning experiences Libraries and museums play a particularly critical role for parents and providers caring for children in home-based programs. For many poor and vulnerable children, they function as community "touch points," creating engaging pathways into knowledge- and skill-building.

2

Engaging and supporting families as their child's first teachers As trusted community anchors, museums and libraries are natural and safe places where families can learn together and access useful resources. Parents, grandparents, and caregivers can borrow books, backpacks, and other materials for home use; learn how to actively engage in age-appropriate interactions with their children; and locate high-quality child and health care providers and other local services.

3

Supporting development of executive function and "deeper learning" skills through literacy and STEM-based experiences Museums and libraries help lay the foundations for later learning and academic and career success, including basic literacy, reading, and STEM. They are adept "brain builders," offering learning environments that address the important social, emotional, and cognitive aspects of learning and foster persistence, self-direction, critical thinking, and problem solving.

4

Creating seamless links across early learning and the early grades Libraries and museums support a growing number of school-based efforts to build a coordinated set of learning experiences and effective transition practices that span the preschool years through the third grade. Many have developed curricula that scaffold increasingly advancing skills and knowledge, as well as partnerships that promote a smooth transition into kindergarten.

5

Positioning children for meeting expectations of the Common Core State Standards Museums and libraries are stewards of cultural, scientific, historical, and environmental heritage, offering rich collections of books and objects that span all disciplines and knowledge levels. They offer exhibits, environments, and programs that foster the interest-driven, project-based learning that is emphasized in the new K–12 Common Core State Standards for Literacy and Math and the Next Generation Science Standards.



Libraries and museums are trusted, welcoming places where children connect their natural curiosity to the wider world.

6

Addressing the summer slide Libraries and museums are important partners in efforts to help children sustain learning during the summer months. Museum visits increase during the summer, with many offering special programs that support continued content and skills learning. School and public libraries are community lynchpins in providing children with access to materials they need to maintain and advance their reading skills over the summer months.

7

Linking new digital technologies to learning With their free public access to the Internet, libraries are important community digital hubs, with expertise in promoting digital, media, and information literacy. Museums and school and public libraries are rich sources of accessible digital media, educational apps, videos, and audio- and e-books, with staff trained to help parents and youth select age-appropriate, content-based, curriculum-linked materials.

8

Improving family health and nutrition Museums and libraries help ensure that all families have access to needed health information and resources. Many offer developmental screenings and vaccination programs; advice and programs on nutrition, exercise, and gardening; and healthy activities for family members of all ages.

9

Leveraging community partnerships Libraries and museums are successfully forging strong collaborative relationships across multiple community sectors—including schools, public broadcasting, housing authorities, hospitals, family health centers, municipal governments, corporations, and universities—to map and address gaps in service provision and programs.

10

Adding capacity to early learning networks State library administrative agencies and, in many states, museum associations can help link libraries and museums with state-based policies and programs. They stand ready to participate actively as a growing number of states build shared seamless, outcomes-based systems of care, services, education, and family supports for young children.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Libraries and museums can improve early learning outcomes, increase school readiness, and help all children, especially those most at risk, read and succeed at grade three and beyond.

Everyone has a role to play.

Federal policy makers can:

- Leverage grants that support museums and libraries as learning partners.
- Support research on the impact of informal learning.
- Invest in institutional capacity for museums and libraries.

State policy makers can:

- Recognize museums and libraries in early learning policy.
- Link museum and library services more intentionally to K–12 education.
- Incorporate museums and libraries into support for community-based initiatives.

Communities can:

- Support the roles of libraries and museums in providing quality programs and services for all children, especially those in family, friend, and neighbor care situations.

- Enhance the use of libraries and museums for vulnerable populations by addressing such resources as transportation and broadband access.
- Consider museums and libraries as community hubs where educators and parents come together to access and explore the effective use of content, collections, and technology.

Schools and Early Learning Programs can:

- Offer joint professional development to teachers, school librarians, and museum and public library staff to create a shared understanding of standards, curricula, best practice, and outcomes.
- Establish partnerships with local libraries and museums to provide programs and resources that support new expectations for building content knowledge, including school readiness and the P–K transition.
- Fully engage school librarians as important learning and literacy resources.

Museums and libraries can:

- Establish strong partnerships with a wide range of community organizations.
- Provide parental and family support and access to quality programs and services, especially for vulnerable populations.



- Create links to schools that support local education priorities and policies, including Common Core and other state standards.
- Incorporate recent research on the brain, executive function, and learning into exhibits and programs.
- Embed rigorous evaluation into program development and base programs on research and evidence.
- Develop grant initiatives to support innovative partnerships among libraries, museums, and other community organizations.
- Support an enhanced research agenda about the effectiveness of libraries and museums on the development of young children.

LEARN MORE

Read the full report, *Growing Young Minds: How Museums and Libraries Create Lifelong Learners*, at www.imls.gov/earlylearning.

ENDNOTES

¹Miller, C., Zickuhr, K., Rainie, L., & Purcell, K. (2013). *Parents' and Children's Special Relationship with Reading and Libraries*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.

²Swan, D. W., & Manjarrez, C. A. (2013). *Children's Visitation to Libraries and Museums*. Research Brief series, no. 1 (IMLS-2013-RB-01). Washington, DC: Institute of Museum and Library Services.

³Neuman, S., & Celano, D. (2012). *Giving Our Children a Fighting Chance: Poverty, Literacy, and the Development of Information Capital*. New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University.

Parents, grandparents, and caregivers can:

- Visit libraries and museums with their children and join with them in discovering programs and services that support effective and enjoyable child development and learning.
- Speak up to staff about the programs and services that they would like to see in their local library and museum.
- Find out whether their local library or museum has resources that can help with their child's transition to kindergarten, homework, or health and nutrition needs.

Funders can:

- Endorse public-private partnerships to advance the role of museums and libraries in early learning.

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ABOUT THE INSTITUTE OF MUSEUM AND LIBRARY SERVICES

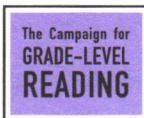
The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 123,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. Our mission is to inspire libraries and museums to advance innovation, lifelong learning, and cultural and civic engagement. Our grant making, policy development, and research help libraries and museums deliver valuable services that make it possible for communities and individuals to thrive. To learn more, visit www.imls.gov and follow us on Facebook www.facebook.com/USIMLS and Twitter @US_IMLS.



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The Heckman Equation



Invest in early childhood development: Reduce deficits, strengthen Montana's economy.

James J. Heckman is the Henry Schultz Distinguished Service Professor of Economics at The University of Chicago, a Nobel Laureate in Economics and an expert in the economics of human development.

Those seeking to reduce deficits and strengthen the economy should make significant investments in early childhood education.

Professor Heckman's ground-breaking work with a consortium of economists, psychologists, statisticians and neuroscientists shows that early childhood development directly influences economic, health and social outcomes for individuals and society. Adverse early environments create deficits in skills and abilities that drive down productivity and increase social costs—thereby adding to financial deficits borne by the public.

Early childhood development drives success in school and life.

A critical time to shape productivity is from birth to age five, when the brain develops rapidly to build the foundation of cognitive and character skills necessary for success in school, health, career and life. Early childhood education fosters cognitive skills along with attentiveness, motivation, self-control and sociability—the character skills that turn knowledge into know-how and people into productive citizens.

Investing in early childhood education for at-risk children is an effective strategy for reducing social costs.

Every child needs effective early childhood supports—and at-risk children from disadvantaged environments are least likely to get them. They come from families who lack the education, social and economic resources to provide the early developmental stimulation that is so helpful for success in school, college, career and life. Poor health, dropout rates, poverty and crime—Montana can address these problems and substantially reduce their costs to taxpayers by investing in developmental opportunities for at-risk children.

Investing in early childhood education is a cost-effective strategy for promoting economic growth.

Our economic future depends on providing the tools for upward mobility and building a highly educated, skilled workforce. Early childhood education is the most efficient way to accomplish these goals:

- Professor Heckman's analysis of the Perry Preschool program shows a 7% to 10% per year return on investment based on increased school and career achievement as well as reduced costs in remedial education, health and criminal justice system expenditures.
- It is very likely that many other early childhood programs are equally effective. Analysts of the Chicago Child-Parent Center study estimated \$48,000 in benefits to the public per child from a half-day public preschool for at-risk children. Participants at age 20 were estimated to be more likely to have finished high school—and were less likely to have been held back, need remedial help or have been arrested. The estimated return on investment was \$7 for every dollar invested.¹
- Investing in early childhood education to increase high school graduation rates would boost Montana's economy. For example, a 5% increase in male high school graduation rates is estimated to save Montana \$11 million² in annual incarceration costs and crime-related expenditures. If that same 5% not only graduated but went on to college at the same rate as typical male high school graduates, their average earnings would accrue an additional \$9 million annually². If just one year's high school dropouts could be converted to high school graduates, Montana households would have an additional \$800 million³ in accumulated wealth over the lifetime of the students from the graduating class.

¹National Institute for Early Childhood Education Research

²<http://www.all4ed.org/files/archive/publications/SavingFutures.pdf>

³<http://www.all4ed.org/files/archive/publications/HighCost.pdf>

The Heckman Equation

Make greater investments in young children to see greater returns in education, health and productivity.

Keep these principles in mind to make efficient and effective public investments that reduce deficits and strengthen the economy:

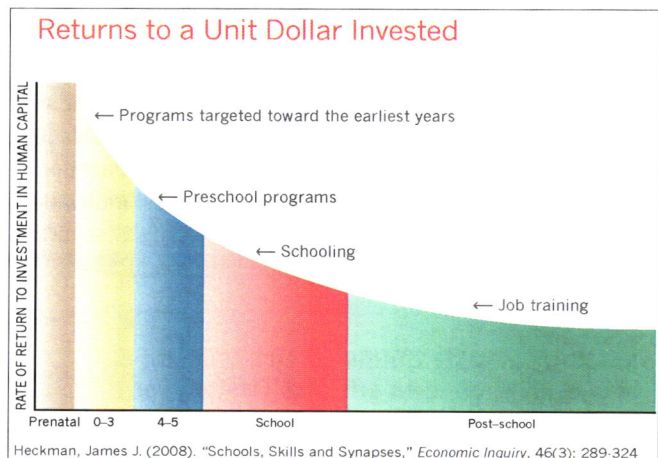
- **Investing in early childhood education is a cost-effective strategy—even during a budget crisis.**

Deficit reduction will only come from wiser investment of public and private dollars. Data show that one of the most effective strategies for economic growth is investing in the developmental growth of at-risk young children. Short-term costs are more than offset by the immediate and long-term benefits through reduction in the need for special education and remediation, better health outcomes, reduced need for social services, lower criminal justice costs and increased self-sufficiency and productivity among families.

- **Prioritize investment in quality early childhood education for at-risk children.** All families are under increasing strain; disadvantaged families are strained to the limit. They have fewer resources to invest in effective early development. Without resources such as “parent-coaching” and early childhood education programs, many at-risk children miss the developmental growth that is the foundation for success. They will suffer for the rest of their lives—and all of us will pay the price in higher social costs and declining economic fortunes.

- **Develop cognitive AND character skills early. Invest in the “whole child.”** Effective early childhood education packages cognitive skills with character skills such as attentiveness, impulse control, persistence and teamwork. Together, cognition and character drive education, career and life success—with character development often being the most important factor.

- **Provide developmental resources to children AND their families.** Direct investment in the child's early development is complemented by investment in parents and family environments. Quality early childhood education from birth to age five, coupled with parent-coaching, such as home visitation programs for parents and teen mothers, has proven to be effective and warrants more investment.
- **Invest, develop and sustain to produce gain.** Invest in developmental resources for at-risk children. Develop their cognitive and character skills from birth to age five, when it matters most. Sustain gains in early development with effective education through to adulthood. Gain more capable, productive and valuable citizens who pay dividends to Montana for generations to come.



Early childhood education is an efficient and effective investment for economic and workforce development. The earlier the investment, the greater the return on investment.



Guest opinion: Montana must invest in quality early childhood services

JUNE 06, 2013 12:05 AM • BY MIKE HALLIGAN

It's not rocket science: People are the Washington Companies' competitive advantage. I suspect most successful business owners will tell you the same. Products and services are critical. So are efficiency-enhancing systems and technologies. But the people who are part of the Washington Companies are our "secret sauce" — the one element that no competitor can duplicate.

Obviously, then, we at the Washington Companies have a bottom-line interest in cultivating our companies' most important resource — not only recruiting good people but investing in their growth and development, so they can fulfill the potential we saw in them.

What's true for our group of companies is true for our communities, our state and our nation. That is why we — and many others in the business community — believe that investing in our youngest children must be a priority. We all share a bottom-line interest in their success.

And rarely have we had the luxury of making an investment decision armed with as much information as we have on the economic value of investing in early care and education. These benefits ultimately accrue to our entire economy — in other words, to us all.

Legislative support

We see the tangible return on investments in young children not just on a national level but here in Montana. As Gov. Steve Bullock noted in his State of the State address, every dollar we invest in early childhood education returns up to \$9 to our communities. I applaud the governor and the Legislature for approving \$2 million to fund early childhood programs, yet we still have far to go. Why? Early childhood programs are the foundation for a skilled workforce, which is key not only to our companies' success but to our economic growth and competitiveness. We know that workers who possess skills for success also gain the earning power to buy more goods and services and help drive economic growth.

Here in Montana, quality early learning will ultimately determine whether we can maintain our relatively low unemployment rate, and it impacts our ability as a state to attract young families and good workers. While much attention has rightly focused on improving the education of young people at the K-12 and postsecondary level, it is critically important to establish the foundation for success during a child's first five years.

What happens during those early years — whether children have regular access to decent health care (including prenatal care for mothers); books in the home that parents read to them; opportunities to develop social-emotional skills, habits such as self-discipline, persistence and cooperation; and early education — largely determines whether they arrive at kindergarten ready to learn or already far behind.

Starting out behind

Children who start kindergarten behind their peers have difficulty catching up quickly. And

children who aren't reading at grade level by the end of third grade are four times more likely to drop out before finishing high school. At a time when a high school diploma no longer brings a young person to the finish line for success, only the starting line, those who drop out have little chance of becoming the workers (or consumers) our economy requires, let alone living the productive lives we wish for all our children.

By contrast, research shows that disadvantaged children involved in early education perform better in math and English, are much more likely to graduate, are significantly less likely to be arrested as juveniles than peers who don't have this opportunity and are more likely to find and retain jobs, purchase homes and be productive members of our communities. When Great Falls made just a modest investment in pre-K programs, it led to a dramatic improvement in kindergarten readiness, putting these children (and the community) on a path for a better future.

We believe so strongly in the importance of early education, health care and parental support efforts that we have joined more than 300 other businesses and organizations from across the country in signing an open letter to President Obama expressing business support for programs that deliver proven long-term benefits for young children.

It's not rocket science. But it's the way we grow rocket scientists. It's not just the right thing to do. It's the smart one.



Early Literacy and Montana Libraries

- Montana libraries are **in nearly every community**, from our largest to our smallest.
- Montana libraries are **free and open** to everyone.
- Montana libraries have **no stigma** attached to the services and resources they provide.
- Montana librarians are **natural collaborators**. Many Montana libraries are actively involved in their community's early childhood councils, working to ensure that all organizations that work with children are aware of the library's early childhood services.
- The Montana State Library is grooming Montana librarians to be their community's **early literacy experts** by regularly providing training on the latest developments in early childhood. Our goal is for local librarians to be able to provide training and resources in their own communities on early literacy development and early learning to everyone from parents and child care providers to child protection specialists and home visitors.
- For many Montana children, the only organized early childhood education they receive is at the library. For many Montana children, the only professional adult they see prior to starting their K-12 education is their librarian. For many Montana families, **the only resource available** for their young children's education and information is their local library.
- Montana libraries are staffed by **information professionals** who can assist parents and caregivers with finding resources that are appropriate for their children.
- Montana libraries offer children and families **everything they need** – from high-quality learning materials for children to parenting books and resources for caregivers – to help prepare children for school and for life.



Overview

Staffing

Federal money pays for ten hours a week of a part-time employee's salary.

A small contract of \$2,150 is also negotiated annually with a librarian who has an early childhood development background to provide webinars and to serve as a knowledge base for other librarians.

Funding

The Montana State Library dedicates approximately \$10,000 annually to support programming for Ready 2 Read through its federal Library Services Technology Act (LSTA) funding. This money has been used to create a web site, develop and print outreach materials, develop early childhood trunks that were given to libraries, and purchase early childhood collections for libraries.

The remainder of the Ready 2 Read program activities has been funded through grants from private foundations.



Background and History

The American Library Association partnered with national researchers, leading educational experts and organizations that serve young children to develop a program that could be implemented in libraries across the nation. See *Every Child Ready to Read: Building On Success* included in this folder.

Some of the world's leading early childhood development experts' research demonstrated that public libraries could have a great impact on early literacy development through an approach that focused on educating parents and caregivers. If the primary adults in a child's life can learn more about the importance of early literacy and how to nurture pre-reading skills at home, the effect of library efforts can be multiplied many times.

The Montana State Library adopted this program because the curriculum is grounded in early literacy research, and is based on tested, research-based principles and best practices from exemplary early literacy programs. MSL launched its program, Ready 2 Read, in 2009 with a range of outreach materials, training opportunities, and more that were designed to target babies, toddlers, and preschoolers.

In 2011, MSL adopted the second edition of the American Library Association's program and developed all new outreach materials and training based on the new message targeting parents and caregivers: To help your child succeed in life, play, write, read, sing, and talk together. All of the new MSL materials were designed to have a Montana look and feel.



Accomplishments

In 2009, when the Montana State Library launched the Ready 2 Read program, fewer than five libraries reported offering programming that was designed specifically for children from birth – three years old. Today, 72 libraries (see map) are now part of the Ready 2 Read program, meaning that they:

- offer regularly scheduled early childhood programming;
- maintain an early childhood collection of materials designed specifically for babies and toddlers needs;
- have received extensive training in early childhood development.

Each of these 72 libraries received a bin of books to either launch or complement their early childhood collection. Each bin included:

- approximately 40 board books;
- materials on how to incorporate early literacy messages into story times to impress upon attending parents the value of sharing language and literacy with a child;
- step-by-step instructions for librarians on how to start their own “books and babies” program;
- sheets of age-appropriate songs for librarians to use during their own early childhood programming;
- a host of age-specific resources that libraries can provide to parents on developmental milestones their child should reach in terms of early literacy skills development;
- more than 75 activities to help develop early literacy skills that libraries can copy and provide to parents.

A web site designed to help parents and caregivers understand how to help their children develop early literacy skills was launched in 2009. See the web site here: <http://ready2readmontana.org>.

The first series of outreach materials was developed in 2009. The series is designed to help parents and caregivers understand the value of sharing books and language with a child beginning at birth and to understand their child's early literacy development.

The Montana State Library early literacy staff person was appointed to Montana's Best Beginnings Advisory Council in 2011.

The Montana State Library partnered with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and the Montana Head Start Collaboration Office to launch a series of trunks for parents, caregivers, childcare providers, and teachers based on the nationally-acclaimed Growing Up Wild curriculum. The trunks are based on different themes and include: owls, ungulates, tracks, creepy-crawlies, water, and bears. The trunk program, called Ready 2 Read Goes Wild!, offers library patrons the opportunity to check out a trunk that is filled with approximately 15 books on the theme, as well as puppets, rubber tracks, skull replicas, antlers, hooves, and animal hides.



Accomplishments, continued

In 2011, Montana FWP received a grant from the Council for Environmental Education's "Building Capacity for Early Childhood Environmental Education for Diverse Audiences" program to conduct outreach and training on Montana's seven tribal reservations to Head Start teachers, child care providers, and librarians on language and literacy featuring the Growing Up Wild curriculum.

The Montana State Library received a grant from First Interstate Bank in 2011 to develop Ready 2 Read Goes Wild! trunks to support Montana's Indian Education for All mandate using the Growing Up Wild curriculum. MSL worked with MT FWP, Head Start, and the Office of Public Instruction's Indian Education division to develop the trunks and to get them to all of Montana's reservation libraries.

The Montana State Library collaborated with Montana PBS to provide a number of libraries with high-quality PBS rugs to complement their children's areas. Additionally, working in conjunction with Head Start, Montana PBS offers several summer early literacy camps targeted to low-income families at local libraries throughout the state. The summer camps use a curriculum developed by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting that has been proven to increase attendees' letter recognition by 90%.

Montana PBS was one of seven states to receive a grant from the Corporation of Public Broadcasting to test the efficacy of using PBS Kids media to improve early literacy skills. The grant funds were used to purchase tablets, SmartBoards, iPhones, and laptops for childcare providers and the libraries that serve the Salish Kootenai reservation. Training was provided to librarians, parents and caregivers and multiple promotional events featuring PBS characters were held at libraries in the region. Results are still being tabulated.

The Montana State Library received a grant from the Dennis & Phyllis Washington Foundation in 2011 to redesign the library environment to be welcoming and appropriate for children beginning at birth; connect parents with the resources, programs and services offered at the library and other family service agencies; and reach out to non-traditional library users. The grant funds were used to develop Ready 2 Read PlaySpaces in fourteen of Montana's most rural libraries, providing these libraries with a high-quality block set, wooden puzzles, and a number of other materials to engage children in appropriate developmental play.

The Montana State Library received a grant from First Interstate Bank in 2011 to conduct two weekend-long trainings for children's librarians, which were held in October 2011 and October 2012. The grant pays for approximately 40 librarians to come together each year to receive three days of training. Travel, hotel, and food are covered for all attendees by the grant. MSL brought nationally-recognized early childhood development experts to Montana to offer training on everything from the social/emotional development of children to block play. The trainings attracted librarians from all over the state and have been instrumental in increasing the capacity of libraries throughout Montana to recognize and realize their full potential as community hubs for healthy child and family development, parent and community involvement and lifelong learning beginning at birth.